Dear Eric and Bret,

I just watched with horror and fascination your brother-to-brother podcast.  My responses are possibly of value to you, but they are so profound and complicated that I despair of getting them down completely.  Thus, I will summarize.

1. Yes! Down with the DISC!  Yes, you have broken into the still-house and are sledge-hammering the kegs, but … alas … you have been unable to resist the temptation to gulp down some of the poison, even as you pour it out onto the forest floor.
2. The poison is the faith that success consists in getting to play with the Big Guys.   According to this faith, there is but one important conversation in the world, a very few people who are “good enough” to join that conversation, the belief that, because you are bright, and able, and have good ideas, you ***deserve*** to be in that conversation, and that the world would be a better place if ***They*** would let you in.  You are, as one southern dean once put it to me, acidly, “*Waiting for the call from Hah-vud.”*
3. The alternative faith is the belief that there are an enormous number of people who can make important contributions, and that the best system is one that nurtures as many of them as possible.  Such a system would be a lumpy surface, not one with a single towering peak.  It would consist of many “schools”, many small journals, many centers of leadership, all working in the benighted illusion that their members have a hold on a truth.
4. Therefore, Bret was right to go to Evergreen (although they were craven beyond belief not to protect him).
5. Therefore, Eric is wrong to send Bret into battle in the mistaken illusion that, as a genius, he is “entitled” to anything other than the rights that all citizens are entitled.  “Entitlement” is a poison no matter the bottle it comes in, and no matter who drinks it.  If Eric believes that Bret’s work needs to be widely known, that is Eric’s battle and Eric needs to fight it without making Bret the point of his spear.
6. I speak with authority.  I, too, drank of that poison, fortunately in small enough quantities not to hideously distort my life.
7. For me, the DISC was George Williams, Richard Dawkins, Robert Trivers, Michael Ruse, Daniel Dennett, Richard Lewontin, David Sloan Wilson and their students.  Fortunately, I found *Perspectives in Ethology* and *Behavior and Philosophy* to take my work, and so I was tenured, reasonably well paid, and lived out a long career.  Best of all, my family was not too much punished for my obsessions.
8. This correspondence is an example of itself.  By being so silly as to write to you, I now enroll you in my DISC.  You will never read this letter.  Why?  Not because you are evil or otiose, but simply because you are so busy trying to scale your own DISC that you have no time for the people below you on the slope.
9. Since, from my point of view, you have already reached the citadel, I ask that you both take on the following responsibility:  Every eminent lecture you give, every time you gather a crowd around you, I urge you to focus on what you are going to leave behind, when you press on to the next one.  Do you leave behind a bunch of people pining to join you amongst the gods?  Or do you leave behind you a group of people inspired to create their own local pantheon and make of it the very best they can?   Remember, science is not about you.  Your lecture is not about you.  It is about the people you bring together, and what they accomplish after you leave.
10. If this letter does ever reach you, I ask that you thumb through the 2-3 dozen papers in the repository, below, under my signature.  Or just look at two, [one](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281295970_Toward_a_Falsifiable_Theory_of_Evolution) early in my career in which I take George Williams ADAPTATION AND NATURAL SELECTION more seriously than he ever did, and a [second](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228580530_Shifting_the_natural_selection_metaphor_to_the_group_level), in which I disentangle the pernicious confusion underlying the group selection controversy.  As you skim these, don’t ask yourself “was this man is a genius”; rather ask yourself if there was not some good ideas in these papers that academia would have been better for having addressed, and if academia would be better organized to allow such little bits of genius to flourish, develop and be heard.
11. I joined the academic world in the last days of the ill-paid, odd-ball, professor, entangled in ivy, clothed in moth-eaten tweeds, lost in dreams of finding the answer.  That’s the life I bought into.   The deal I accepted was that I would not be paid much money, and, in return, I could think about pretty much whatever I wanted to think about.  Slow summers in some shack in the Appalachians, pondering the great unknowns.  But then came Sputnik, which made professors think of themselves as celebrities, and Academic Reaganism, which enforced a production metaphor on us.  I mourn the loss of the Jimmy Stewart professor.
12. I hope you see how hideously pathetic and contradictory this letter is. Indeed,  I hope you also see how hideously pathetic is *any* attempt to assault the citadel, even your own attempt,  if it is based on the notion that there are such creatures as geniuses and that they “deserve” to be elevated.

Thank you for your work. In general, I regard video-podcasts as an utter waste of time, but I found yours riveting, for so many reasons.

And, yes, thanks to you, I have thrown away the sample of Vioxx that my Doctor gave me 5 years back.

All the best,